

One Hundred Years of Donald Davidson Introduction

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1. Some Hints on Davidson's Philosophy

Donald Davidson (1917-2003) is one of the few contemporary philosophers of the analytic tradition who offered significant contentious contributions to many different areas of philosophy while preserving a semi-systematic character in his writings. His output was huge, ranging from decision theory to philosophy of language, from metaphysics to philosophy of action, from philosophy of mind to epistemology. In this introduction we shall focus on a limited number of themes, which we believe better exemplify the originality of Davidson's thought.

1.1 Theory of Meaning and Radical Interpretation

According to Davidson's first theory of meaning, a satisfactory theory of meaning for natural languages (that is, a theory specifying a systematic interpretation of all the potential sentences of a specific language) must take the form of an axiomatic theory. To begin with, the meaning of the words of a certain natural language must be defined by way of a finite set of axioms. Next, the meaning of all the sentences of that language must be derived through suitable rules of inference that define a potentially infinite number of theorems of the form 's means that p'.

The most original aspect of his project is its purely extensional nature. Following his teacher Quine, Davidson rejects intentional entities, such as intentions, meanings or translations, as they would create exactly the same kinds of problems that a good theory of meaning is supposed to resolve. To pair sentences with the world without appealing to intentional entities, he then exploits the extensional notion of truth -- or more precisely, of the predicate 'is true'. He in fact believes that what a sentence of a given language means can simply be read from a theory of truth *à la* Tarski (1983), whose theorems take the form 's is true in *L* iff *p*'. In this way, Tarski's original project of analysing truth by way of translation and identity of meaning comes to be reversed, as Davidson assumes

the concept of truth as primitive and then exploits it to shed light on the notion of meaning. In other words, he sees a quasi-Tarskian theory of truth as the right vehicle for deriving a satisfactory theory of meaning without running the risk of reducing meaning to truth (Davidson 1967b, 1973).

Adopting a Tarski-style theory of truth to serve as a theory of meaning, all the sentences of a natural language must be formalised in first-order logic. However, in order to formalise sentences containing certain types of adverbial modifiers into first-order logic, it is necessary to admit events into our ontology (Davidson 1967a, 1985a), conceived as unrepeatable, concrete particulars located in space and time (Davidson 1985b, 1970a). This means that, even if events play a pivotal role in Davidson's overall philosophy, they are admitted to our ontology and conceived as particulars for specific semantic reasons.

Developing a theory of meaning structured as a quasi-Tarskian theory of truth is not only important from a purely semantic point of view, it is also preliminary to shedding light on radical interpretation—that is, to understand what is necessary in order to interpret a speaker without knowing anything about her/his language. In fact, a radical interpreter should first develop a Tarski-style theory of meaning and then confirm it by appealing to the speaker's external behaviour and further empirical evidence. However, the problem is precisely that of ascertaining the empirical correctness of the theory of meaning just developed.

To begin with, a radical interpreter must discover the speaker's attitudes of 'holding true'; that is, whether she/he holds a sentence true or not in particular circumstances. Of course, holding a sentence true is already a semantic attitude, but Davidson believes that it can precede interpretation: the interpreter may know that the speaker holds a certain sentence to be true without recognising which specific truth it is (Davidson 1973). Thus, the problem is that of clarifying how radical interpretation can progress from the mere assumption that the interpreter knows that the speaker holds a certain sentence to be true. As such, a circle seems inevitable: in order to determine the meaning of a sentence, the interpreter should be able to establish what the speaker believes; however, in order to establish what the speaker believes, the interpreter should be able to determine the meaning of the sentence. In Davidson's mind, however, the interdependence of belief and meaning can be easily broken up by finding "a method for holding one factor steady while the other is studied" (Davidson 1975: 167).

Such a method is supplied by the "principle of charity", which is taken not to be an option but as a constitutive element of interpretation. In its original formulation, the principle of charity compels the interpreter to assume that, *ceteris paribus*, the speaker's beliefs are by and large true, and thus to ascribe to the speaker a great number of true beliefs (true, of course, from the standpoint of the interpreter). In this way, the circle of beliefs and meaning is broken by holding belief constant and then solving the meaning. In later works, the principle of charity is divided by Davidson into two different strands: the principle of correspondence and that of coherence. While the principle of correspondence reaffirms the idea that, *ceteris paribus*, the speaker's beliefs must be regarded as largely true, the principle of coherence ascribes attribute beliefs to the speaker so as to make her/him out to be largely rational (again, from the standpoint of the interpreter). In other words, while the principle of correspondence focuses on the empirical constraints imposed on the interpretation by the external world, the principle of coherence focuses on holistic constraints imposed on the interpretation by the basic norms of rationality. However, these two principles might

sometimes be in conflict: in certain circumstances, the overall rationality of the speaker can only be maintained by ascribing either false beliefs or beliefs very different from our own (Davidson 1984: xix), the aim being that of optimising understanding of the speaker. Thus, even if few false beliefs or very limited contradictions might sometimes be attributed to the speaker, her/his beliefs must ultimately be largely true and coherent.

1.2 Conceptual Schemes

Davidson's reflections on the principle of charity are useful to understanding his critique of the idea of a conceptual scheme (Davidson 1974). In his mind, a conceptual scheme can be identified with a set of inter-translatable languages; thus, should two languages fail to be translated one into the other, two incommensurable conceptual schemes would appear. If a conceptual scheme is identified with a set of inter-translatable languages, then it can be analysed through the notion of non-translatable languages. However, Davidson aims to show that this notion is totally empty: there is no language that cannot be translated into our own language, at least in principle.

On one hand, if our attempts to translate a speaker's language into our own language fail completely, as in the alleged case of complete incommensurability, then there would be no reason to suppose that the speaker is a rational creature endowed with a language, beliefs and others propositional thoughts. Thus, there would be no reason to suppose that she/he has a conceptual scheme. On the other hand, if our attempts to translate a speaker's language into our own language only partially fail, as in the case of incomplete incommensurability, then radical interpretation has been only partially successful, nevertheless implying that we succeeded in attributing a largely true and coherent set of beliefs to the speaker (from our own standpoint). This shared common ground is what is needed to understand local differences and errors. Because whether a particular contrast is due to a divergence between conceptual schemes or a mere difference of opinions is always blurred, the very notion of conceptual scheme loses most of its interest and plausibility, proving to be empty and senseless.

Along with the notion of conceptual scheme, Davidson also aims to get rid of the notion of empirical content, in which empirical content is taken to be some neutral content waiting to be organised and carved up by conceptual schemes. The empirical content organised by conceptual schemes is individuated in empirical experience, in the totality of sensory stimuli, in sensations, etc. The content allegedly plays a mediating role between conceptual scheme and reality, so that reality becomes related to the conceptual scheme that organises the empirical content. As every conceptual scheme organises the empirical content in a different way, "what counts as real in one system may not in another" (Davidson 1974: 183).

By rejecting the distinction between conceptual scheme and empirical content, Davidson refuses any form of conceptual relativism. Indeed, he aims to show that relativism is bound to fail on its own terms. According to Davidson, exponents of relativism who expressly theorise the existence of different and incommensurable conceptual schemes include philosophers of science like Hilary Putnam and Paul Feyerabend, historians of science like Thomas Kuhn, linguists like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, and even his master Willard van Orman Quine (1951, 1960). Indeed, the rejection of the two dogmas of analyt-

ic/synthetic distinction and reductionism did not lead Quine also to eliminate the third dogma of empiricism: the dualism between the organising system and something waiting to be organised. According to Davidson, by renouncing the analytic/synthetic dualism, and consequently the distinction between sentences true by virtue of both their meaning and their empirical content and those true only by virtue of their meaning, we can still support the idea of empirical content. We could in fact affirm that *all* the utterances have an empirical content, precisely as Quinean empiricism does. According to Davidson, the *basis* of Quinean empiricism without dogmas indeed still rests in the dogma of the distinction between conceptual scheme and empirical content.

1.3 Natural Language and Communication

Davidson's first theory of meaning and his reflections about radical interpretation are intellectually deep, but they may appear far from everyday communication where the widespread presence of polysemy, metaphors, malapropisms and slips of the tongue compels the interpreter to continuously readjust her/his own hypothesis and expectations about meaning. For this reason, at some stage of his career, Davidson called into question the image of language he shared for a long time with most linguists and philosophers of language, concluding that "there is no such thing as what some philosophers (me included) have *called* a language" (Davidson 1994: 2).

In particular, Davidson started to believe that the theory of meaning that speakers bring to a single occasion of everyday communication (their "prior theory") differs from speaker to speaker, and also, with regard to the same speaker, over time and contexts. When the communication begins, speakers adjust their original theory of meaning to maximise their understanding of the particular interlocutors they are interacting with. The result is a transitory theory of meaning (the "passing theory"), which is eventually shared by both speakers, thus allowing mutual interpretation, but is limited to just a specific occasion of communication. This means that it is not the previous sharing of the same theory of meaning that makes communication possible (no prior theory is shared), but rather successful communication that guarantees the sharing of the same theory of meaning (the passing theory is shared on single occasions of communication).

The above reflections are also important to understanding Davidson's highly contentious claim that "there is no such thing as a language" (Davidson 1986: 174). With this claim, he attempts to argue against the idea, maintained by many linguists and philosophers, that a language is essentially characterised by a set of syntactic and semantic conventional rules gained well before the specific occasions of communications, and then shared on those occasions. The distinction between passing and prior theory shows that if we take language to be characterised by prior and conventional rules, then language cannot be shared; if we take language to be shared by both speaker and interpreter, then language cannot be characterised by prior and conventional rules. This also means that, considering the relationship between idiolects and natural languages, the former are conceptually primary while the latter are only secondary, being an overlapping of different idiolects. This, of course does not amount to saying that natural languages, conceived as abstractions built up from different idiolects, do not exist, but only that they are not conceptually primary with respect to idiolects.

To be more precise, there is also something that Davidson believes must occur prior to all occasions of communication and be shared by both interlocutors at the time of communication in order for it to be successful: that is, the speaker's intention to be interpreted as she/he actually intends and expects to be interpreted. This basic intention, without which communication would not be feasible, forces the speaker to make her-/himself interpretable as much as possible and also explains why speakers belonging to the same community tend to make their idiolects uniform (Davidson 1994).

Talking of everyday communication, special attention has been given to the meaning of metaphors (Davidson 1978). On this point, Davidson criticises the idea, shared by both interactive and conceptual theories of meaning, that metaphor is a special linguistic and cognitive phenomenon, totally different from literal expressions. Davidson paradoxically claims that the metaphorical meaning of a term is not different from its literal meaning. His paper strongly criticises conceptual reduction cognitive semantics, where literal meaning is seen as a 'superficial' consequence of conceptual, cognitive mechanisms. In light of Davidson's view, a metaphor is nothing but an image that cannot be reduced to linguistic-propositional structures. In Davidson's words, a metaphor, like a picture, "is not worth a thousand words, or any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture" (Davidson 1978: 46).

In recent research on pragmatics, Robyn Carston (2010) partially answers this kind of criticism by distinguishing between different processing for lexicalised and novel metaphors. In her formulation, a conceptual route to lexicalised metaphors would still exist. However, in the case of novel or literary metaphors, an alternative, 'imaginative' route is hypothesised (Carston 2010; Carston and Wearing 2011). In doing so, Carston assigns more importance to the evocative power of images in metaphor understanding, and reassesses Davidson's view in which metaphors have "no other meaning than the literal one" (Davidson 1978). The "ulterior purpose" (Davidson 2001a: 272) of a metaphor is indeed to produce an imagistic effect that is exactly due to its literal meaning (White 1996, 2001). The metaphorical interpretation would maintain the literal meaning of the metaphorically used language, which undergoes a more global pragmatic process resulting in a range of communicated affective and imagistic effects. This idea is also confirmed by experimental studies showing that in the process of metaphor interpretation, demanding attentional resources are needed in order to suppress the literal meaning (Glucksberg *et al.* 2001; Rubio Fernandez 2007).

1.4 Events, Mind, Actions

As we have seen, events conceived as particulars are primarily needed to solve some controversial aspects of natural language semantics. However, they also play a central role in Davidson's argument for anomalous monism (Davidson 1970b, 1992b, 1995a), a view about the mental that aims at offering a solution to the mind-body problem by, the one hand, preserving ontological monism and mental causality and, on the other hand, eschewing reductionism and holding mental anomalousness (this last desideratum means that contrary to orthodox anti-reductionism, such as functionalism, Davidson believes no strict psychophysical laws and no strict psychological laws involving mental events exist). The anomalousness of the mental is strictly linked to Davidson's idea that the mental is holistic and normative—two features that are obviously alien to the

physical world. If, for instance, there were strict psychophysical laws connecting mental events to physical events, then mental events could be identified without referring to their holistic and rational constraints; however, this would amount to denying the holistic and normative character of the mental.

Anomalous monism follows from the attempt to accommodate three apparently conflicting principles that Davidson sees as true: (1) the principle of (psychophysical) causal interaction; (2) the principle of the nomological character of causality; and (3) the principle of the anomalousness of the mental. According to (1), some mental events causally interact with physical events; (2) states that events related as cause and effect must be covered by strict laws, thus implying that mental events involved in causal interactions should also be subsumed by such laws; however, (3) states that there are no strict psychophysical laws and no strict psychological laws.

Despite the apparent tension, Davidson believes that the above principles can all be held simultaneously. As events are conceived as concrete particulars, located in space and time, they can admit of different descriptions. So, a distinction can be made between causal *relationships*, which connect single tokens of events, and causal *explanations*, which instead connect general types of events under certain descriptions. Now, in a monistic framework, at the extensional level every single token of a mental event must be identical to a single token of a physical event; it is actually the very same event that can then be described using both mental and physical vocabulary. Single tokens of mental events can thus be part of causal relationships by virtue of their being identical to single tokens of physical events. This means that (1) can be held at the level of event tokens. An event token that is described with a mental vocabulary can be also described, at least in principle, with a physical vocabulary; under physical descriptions, types of events can possibly be subsumed by strict physical laws, and this makes the formulation of causal *explanations* feasible. Thus, (2) is fully respected. At the same time, under mental descriptions, types of events can be subsumed by no strict psychophysical laws and no strict psychological laws, which is exactly what (3) states.

Even if anomalous monism is strongly committed to ontological monism and is compatible with the current methodologies of cognitive sciences, it is still often perceived as an anti-naturalist thesis as it denies the possibility that there could ever be a science of the mind characterized by strict psychological and psychophysical laws (even if it does not deny the possibility of non-strict laws). That being said, other authors, such as Jennifer Hornsby (1997) and John McDowell (1985), have proposed stronger readings of the anomalousness of the mental, rejecting Davidson's token identity theory and identifying the mental *only* with the level of propositional thought.

Davidson not only defends mental causation, but he also boldly maintains the causal character of reasons for action (Davidson 1963). In his view, the explanation of action through reasons is a form of causal explanation, as the reasons that truly explain actions are just causes of those actions. Looking at a specific action, there are always many possible reasons that can rationalise it in an equally suitable way. Claiming that reasons are causes makes it easy to select the real reason among the various alternatives: the real reason is that which actually caused the action.

The downside of claiming that reasons are causes is that such a claim seems in contrast with the holistic and normative character of the mental: to talk about

causes there must be strict laws, but such laws are eschewed from the mental. To reconcile causal explanation and rational explanation, Davidson again exploits his conception of events as concrete particulars. Reason and action are two events (the agent's believing and desiring such and such, and the agent's acting in a certain way) that can be differently described, admitting of both a mental and a physical description. When described with mental vocabulary, reasons can rationally explain actions but the connection between reasons and actions cannot be subsumed under any strict psychophysical or psychological law, thus preserving the holistic and normative character of the mental. However, should they be described with physical vocabulary, reasons could causally explain actions as the connection between reasons and actions physically described could be subsumed under strict physical laws. So, rational explanation can be considered a form of causal explanation inasmuch as some law-like regularities exist: even if such regularities cannot be described with the language of rationality, that is with mental vocabulary, they can still be described with physical vocabulary, at least in principle. At the same time, rational explanation remains irreducible to non-rational explanation, as no law-like regularity can be described with the language of rationality.

1.5 Triangulation

With the notion of triangulation (Davidson 1982), a situation in which two creatures mutually interact in the context of a common external world, the deep link between language and thought—which was already present in radical interpretation—possibly becomes even stronger. To explain how this is the case let us examine what conditions are, in principle, needed for having beliefs, in particular empirical beliefs—that is, beliefs concerning the external world (Davidson 1990, 1992a, 1995b, 1999, 2001b, 2001c). First, one has to understand how experience contributes to determining the content of such beliefs—content that is objective, in the sense of being true or false independently of the existence of those beliefs or the subject entertaining them. Second, the subject must be aware of the objectivity of the content, realising that what she/he believes might be false. According to Davidson, both desiderata—the determination of empirical content and the idea of objectivity—can only emerge in an intersubjective and linguistic framework that is brought about by triangulation.

In the most basic cases, what determines, at least partially, the content of an empirical belief is its *typical* cause; that is, the cause that is repeatedly associated with that content (Davidson 1999). Such a cause, however, must be accounted for with respect to its distance and width. On the one hand, the cause must be located somewhere along the causal chain from the external world to the mind; on the other, the exact portion of the world constituting *the* relevant cause must be circumscribed. According to Davidson both desiderata can in principle be obtained only within the triangular situation, where two subjects react to the same external stimuli and perceive them in a similar way. By appealing to triangulation, the distance can be accounted for by putting the typical cause in the external world at the distal level where the two lines connecting each subject to the world intersect, while the width can be accounted for by appealing to the sharing of each other's reaction to the external stimulus. In this way, the typical cause has been considerably narrowed down, but it still remains partially underdetermined. Only the introduction of language can solve once and

for all the underdetermination of the ‘typical’ cause: “A concept is defined [...] by its typical causes, given that we are already in the world of language and conceptualization” (Davidson 2001c: 124).

Exhibiting discriminatory abilities, complex as they might be, is not enough for propositional thought as the concept of objectivity is needed to say that a subject is able to classify objects and understand that what has been ascribed to a certain class may ultimately not belong to it (Davidson 1982). In Davidson’s view, the concept of error—the idea that we can be mistaken—can in principle be acquired only within the triangular situation, where two triangulating subjects can then learn to associate certain responses of the interlocutor to some relevant external stimuli and then expect the same response when the same external stimuli occur. Again, even if the triangulation is needed to create the right space for the ensuing emergence of the concept of error, and thus of objectivity, only the introduction of language can make it appear because in order to grasp the concept of objectivity, the subjects must communicate to each other the contents of their common experience (Davidson 1982, 1999).

The triangular situation not only exemplifies the social character of thought (i.e., its intersubjective dimension), but also the inextricable relationship between language and thought. Moreover, triangulation makes clear the originality of Davidson’s semantic externalism, dubbed “triangular externalism”. This view is quite different from other kinds of semantic externalism (Putnam 1975; Burge 1979). At first sight, it resembles a form of perceptual (or physical or causal) externalism, as meaning and content are determined by their typical external cause. However, the presence of an interpreter, a social element, is taken to be necessary to identify the relevant cause. Thus, the social element is not present in the form of social rules and convention, as in standard social externalisms, but in the form of an interpreter who enters into the process of determining the typical cause.

The notion of triangulation has received a great deal of attention in the last few years (Amoretti and Preyer 2011; Bernecker 2013; Myers and Verheggen 2016): if some authors have widely criticised it as either unable or unnecessary to determine empirical content and the concept of objectivity, others have complained particularly about the strict relationship between thought and language (Bar-On and Priselac 2011; Sinclair 2005). That being said, an interesting link between triangulation and the psychological notion of ‘joint attention’ has recently been highlighted (Amoretti 2013; Brink 2004; Elia 2005), yielding more naturalist readings of Davidson’s triangulation.

1.6 Links to Continental Tradition

Going beyond the differences that still divide the analytic from the Continental philosophical tradition, Davidson’s theses have been associated with those defended by Continental philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas (Schatzki 1986; Fultner 2011; Baynes 2016) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Ramberg 1989; Malpas 1992; Hoy 1997). More specifically, Davidson’s philosophy has been compared with that of Habermas in terms of its strong normative approach and “the rationalization of meaning and understanding” (Schatzki 1986), and is considered similar to that of Gadamer because of the relevance given to the holistic and creative nature of the interpretative act, the contextuality and flexibility of human comprehension, and the need for the constant accommodation of our theo-

ries in order to understand what the speaker means (Dreyfus 1980). Even some links with Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism have been suggested and explored, in particular his nihilism about meaning (Wheeler 2000).

Although some real affinities with certain Continental views have openly been acknowledged by Davidson himself—such as, the common dialectic method borrowed from Plato's *Philebus* (Davidson 1997)—there are also some important differences. For instance, Davidson denied the very possibility of a radical difference between speaker and interpreter in terms of conceptual schemes, which conversely is fundamental in a hermeneutic perspective such as that proposed by Gadamer. Moreover, Davidson never definitively abandoned the first formulation given to his theory of interpretation, even though in later writings (Davidson 1986, 1989) he looked at it as a “complex abstract object”, a “machine” producing interpretation, and tried to provide an alternative explanation more liable to comparison with the theses of another philosophical tradition.

3. The Contributions to this Special Issue

In this final section, we offer a brief summary of the contributions to this special issue.

In his ‘Truth-theoretic Semantics and Its Limits’, Kirk Ludwig presents an assessment of Davidson's theory of radical interpretation on the basis of its answers to the fundamental question of the semantic notion of meaning: “What is it for words to mean what they do?” (Davidson 1984: xiii). Davidson aimed to provide the radical interpreter with the means to answer this question, i.e. a *corpus* of information necessary and sufficient to understand the speaker. A theory of meaning must give an explanation of a potentially infinite number of sentences, starting from a finite basic vocabulary and finite set of rules in order to be used by an interpreter who has finite powers. Faced with the problem of potentially unlimited linguistic productivity, Davidson turns to the ‘principle of compositionality’ (Davidson 1967b, 1973). Ludwig argues that the aims of a ‘theory of meaning’ differ from the aims of a ‘meaning theory’, which is instead intended to be empirically verifiable and able to give a holistic explanation of how a specific natural language works. The author concludes that for the aims of a meaning theory, this corpus of information is neither necessary nor sufficient to guarantee the comprehension of any potential utterance in the language and it is instead worth relating meaning to the roles that words and sentences play in communicative contexts (Jankovic 2014).

In their ‘Davidson: Decision and Interpretation’, Pol-Vincent Harnay and Pétronille Rème focus on an often neglected aspect of Davidson's work; his seminal contribution to decision theory. According to these authors, the origins and foundations of Davidson's unified theory of thought, meaning and action can be traced back to the experiments he led in Stanford during the 1950s: the ‘wording effect’ and the omission of meanings, which undermine decision theory as a whole, actually underlined the need to enlarge the basis of decision theory by integrating an interpretation theory that reflects mental holism more accurately. Harnay and Rème then rely on Davidson's criticisms of decision theory to shed light on the embeddedness of decision theory and interpretation theory. This approach can be particularly useful for understanding how Davidson came to develop his unified theory of thought, meaning and action as well as the overall consistency of his work.

Pascal Engel, in his 'Davidson on the objectivity of values and reasons', investigates another aspect of Davidson's philosophy that has received much less attention than others; that is, his views on ethics and meta-ethics, and in particular his argument in favour of the objectivity of moral values. His argument is based on the idea that the interpretation of desires must be holistic and presupposes a large pattern of agreement, which cannot fail to track objective truths about the values of subjects. Examining Davidson's conception of moral values in relation to what he has to say on emotions and their relations to values, Engel argues that, even assuming that the claim that values are objective can be effectively proved on the basis of constraints on interpretation, this is not enough to give us a genuine form of moral realism. Engel then suggests that a solution can be found by adopting the fitting attitude analysis of value, according to which the conditions of the correctness of emotions and attitudes must be specified, not in descriptive or factual terms, but in normative terms.

In his 'Norm and failure in mind and meaning', Akeel Bilgrami explores an apparent conflict between two of Davidson's main theses: first, the claim that normativity is constitutive of the human mind and behaviour; and, second, the idea that normativity does not constitute linguistic meaning. As human linguistic behaviour is a specific kind of human behaviour, how can the above two theses be compatible? According to Bilgrami, Davidson mistakenly understands what the first claim amounts to, as he takes normativity to enter human mentality in the form of general principles of rationality governing mental states, which are primarily causal and dispositional states. Wittgenstein, however, understands this very same claim differently, seeing mental states as *themselves* primarily normative states. The latter interpretation seems better for Bilgrami, as it can dispel the above-mentioned conflict. This can be shown by reflecting on the concept of 'failure', a concept that presupposes a norm and is thus essential to understanding the nature of norms.

Peter Pagin, in 'Radical Interpretation and Pragmatic Enrichment', reconsiders Davidson's theory of radical interpretation in light of the contemporary debate on the linguistic phenomenon of pragmatic enrichment. The focus of the paper is in fact the intermediate layer of meaning that is neither linguistically encoded nor implicated but rather explicitly said and in need of pragmatic inferential processes besides, in order to be grasped (Carston 2002; Recanati 2004, 2010). Pragmatic enrichment is due to the fact that meaning is largely underdetermined by the conventional meaning of a sentence, and as such could be a problem for radical interpretation as a speaker might hold a sentence true, not because of believing the content of the sentence in the specific context but rather as a result of a pragmatic enrichment of that content. By applying a coherence-raising account of pragmatic enrichment (Pagin 2014), the author argues that pragmatic enrichment does not constitute a problem for radical interpretation, either in upward entailing contexts because the enriched content entails the prior content, or in downward entailing contexts where enrichments tend not to occur.

In his 'Language's Dreamwork Reconsidered', Andreas Heise reconsiders Davidson's view on metaphor, according to which, in using metaphor the speaker is not conveying any message other than the literal one and metaphors are therefore not 'special' especially in terms of cognitive content. In Davidson's words, "metaphor can, like a picture or a bump on the head, make us appreciate some fact but not by standing for, or expressing, the fact" (Davidson 1978: 46). Against a traditional interpretation of Davidson's view as a defender of a non-

cognitivist theory of metaphor (Reimer and Camp 2006; Cook 2009; Lepore and Ludwig 2013), Heise argues that in later writings (such as Davidson 1986, 1993) Davidson suggests that metaphor's distinctive effect is to prompt a mental state, i.e. the mental state of 'seeing-as'. In this framework, Heise specifies the distinction between 'cognitive content' and 'non-cognitive content', and discusses the problem of whether and how it is possible to have communicative intentions toward a non-propositional content, such as the imagistic/figurative content of a metaphor.

Daniel D. Hutto and Glenda Satne, in 'Demystifying Davidson: Radical interpretation meets radical enactivism', examine two strands in Davidson's thought that apparently come into tension. On the one hand, reflections on holism and the autonomy of propositional thought seem to give way to anti-naturalism, as there would be no way for natural sciences to shed light on the relationship between the mental and the natural world. On the other, the insistence that a theory of meaning is an empirical theory pulls in the direction of naturalism, showing that the mental can be accessed by extensional tools and is thus located within the realm of nature. To solve this tension, Hutto and Satne propose to relax the conditions on how we characterise minds, and to accept the Radical Enactivist claim that minds can be intentionally directed to the world without contentfully representing it. By distinguishing *contentless* from *contentful* intentional attitudes, the connections between contentful thought and the natural world can thus become less mysterious.

In her 'Davidson's semantic externalism: From radical interpretation to triangulation', Claudine Verheggen offers a new interpretation of the journey from Davidson's early works on radical interpretation to his later works on triangulation, taking it to be continuous. In particular, she claims that Davidson's semantic externalism does not emerge first with triangulation but was already rooted in radical interpretation, and that such externalism, combining both physical and social externalism, has always been not only holistic and historical, but also social and non-reductionist. If radical interpretation establishes the broad externalist claim that the causes of an utterance play a fundamental role in determining its meaning, then triangulation explains how the relevant causes are isolated as the meaning determinants by introducing the social element. As Davidson's externalism clearly differs from orthodox ones (Putnam 1975, Burge 1979), Verheggen concludes with a brief comparison of them.¹

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